

216 *MOTHER-KIN AND MOTHER
GODDESSES* DOOKIII

family most probably explains the custom of
brother and
sister marriage In Egypt¹
Thus the union of Osiris with his sister Isis
was not a
marriage of the story-teller's fancy : it reflected a
social custom
Osiris" with which was itself based on practical
considerations of the
most solid kind. When we reflect that
this practice of
reflected a mother-kin as opposed to father-kin
survived down to
the latest times of antiquity, not in an
obscure and bar-
barous tribe, but in a nation whose immemorial
civilization
was its glory and the wonder of the world, we may
without
being extravagant suppose that a similar practice
formerly
prevailed in Syria and Phrygia, and that it
accounts for
the superiority of the goddess over the god in the
divine
partnerships of Adonis and Astarte, of Attis and
Cybele.
But the ancient system both of society and of
religion
had undergone far more change in these
countries than
in Egypt, where to the last the main outlines of
the old
structure could be traced in the national
institutions to
which the Egyptians clung with a passionate, a
fanatical
devotion. Mother-kin, the divinity of kings and
queens, a
sense of the original connexion of the gods with
nature—
these things outlived the Persian, the Macedonian, the
Roman
conquest, and only perished under the more powerful
solvent
The of Christianity. But the old order did not
vanish at once
with the official establishment of the new
religion. In the
old world age of Constantine the Greeks of Egypt still
attributed the
rise of the Nile to Serapis, the later form of
Osiris, alleging

¹ This is in substance the explanation of the University of

Cambridge, (Cuintion which Miss Rachel Evelyn Whitebridge, 1906), pp. 154 sq. I (Mrs. Wedd) gives of the Egyptian stand from Professor VV. M. Flinders custom. See her paper, "Women in Petrie that the theory has been a Ptolemaic 7L&\$^1.? Journal of Helleniccommonplace with JSgyptolo^i.sls for Studies, xviii. (1898) p. 265. Similarly many years. McLennan explained the Mr. J. Nietzold observes that "econo- marriage of brothers and sisters in mical considerations, especially in the royal families as an expedient for shift-case of great landowners, may often have ing the succession from the female to been the occasion of marriages with the male line ; but he did not extend sisters, the intention being in this way the theory so as to explain similar mar-to avoid a division of the property" riages among common people in Egypl, (Die Eke in Agypten, p. 13). Theperhaps because he was not awjirc of sa'me explanation of the custom has the facts. See J. F. McLennan, 77/6' been given by Prof. W. Ridgeway. Patriarchal Theory, edited and 'corn- See his " Supplices of Aeschylus," in pler.ed by D. McLennan (London, Praelcctions delivered before the Senate 1885), p. 95.